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THE
H I N T:

OR,

A Free Thought, or Two,

Offered to the
C O N S I D E R A T I O N

Of All those MAGNANIMOUS

British-HEROES,

WHO HAVE

Boldly *Attack'd, Routed, and Overcome,*

The FEAR of an

O A T H, or a C U R S E.

More Particularly,

Coach-men, Car-men, Porters, Water-men, &c.

WITH

A *short HINT* at a new Method of a *general Reform*; humbly proposed to the Consideration of the LEGISLATURE.

*No, not an Oath: If not the Face of Men,
The Sufferance of our Souls ———
What need we other Bond,
Than faithful Romans that have spoke the Word,
And will not palter? And what other Oath
Than Honesty to Honesty engaged ———
Swear PRIESTS, and COWARDS, and Men cautelous,
Old feeble Carrions, and such suffering Souls
That welcome Wrongs: Unto bad Causes swear!
Such Creatures as Men doubt; ———
Brutus in SHAKESPEAR's Julius Caesar.*

By a GREGORIAN. *R*

L O N D O N :

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THE HINT, &c.



THE Light of Nature, directs Men to conclude, that there is no Condition in which Man can be plac'd in this Life, that can render him unaccountable for his Words and Actions at some Day of final reckoning. And Revelation tells us, that the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and rich Men, and chief Captains and mighty Men, will be equally concern'd in that solemn Process with every Bondman, Day-labourer or Slave, and with every Freeman of the lowest Station; for that *every Man*, none excepted of the whole human Family, shall be judged, or receive Sentence according to his Works, or to those Deeds done in his Body, that is, whilst in this Life, whether they be *Good* or whether they be *Evil*.

Being, Life, and Happiness, are therefore of the same Importance to you, as they are to

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the greatest Potentates in the World.—Let me then, as one that is sincerely concern'd for the Welfare of all Men, prevail with you to read without Prejudice, and with cool and sober Thought what I here propose to your Consideration.

I have for many Years liv'd within the Confines of this great City; and not only in Places of your public and stated Resort have I observ'd your Conduct, but I have had innumerable Opportunities of making my Observations upon you as singly and severally employ'd in almost every Street and Place of Residence as I have pass'd and repass'd.

And there is not any Thing more evident than that the Vice of *prophane Cursing and Swearing is become habitual and customary among you.*

But before I offer some Considerations upon this *Vice*, let me give you an Hint that may prevent a Mistake; I mean not to charge every individual of each Class more particularly refer'd to, with the Crime; as having been able, with the greatest Pleasure, to observe several Exceptions; nor can you think with what Charms such Instances of Singularity appear!

I shall stay no longer on the Introduction, but proceed immediately to the Point in view, which is to detect and expose these Crimes, in the plainest and best Manner I am able.

And to this Purpose I wou'd define what is to be understood by a Curse, or an Oath.

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And by a *Curse*, I mean, any Expressions made use of, which imply a Desire or Wish of our own Hurt, or that of any others; which becomes yet more Prophane, when we invoke God to succeed such our Desires or Wishes.

By an *Oath*, I wou'd be understood to mean, an exprefs Appeal to God for the Truth of what we affirm or deny.

I shall begin with *Cursing*, and endeavour to expose the Unreasonableness, Folly, and Wickedness of it under the following Particulars;

And, 1. It is a manifest Abuse of the Design of Speech, and of the Law of our Make. The Organs of Speech were given us for the most kind and benevolent Purposes; their Intention was that we might more readily convey and impart to one another, the Thoughts and Sentiments of our Minds; that our own Knowledge or that of others, or our own Welfare or that of others, might be promoted. It is a quick or speedy Means of informing one another of Dangers to which we are expos'd, as it can give the plainest and earliest Notice of such Evils we at any time come at the Knowledge of. By Speech we are render'd capable of transacting the Business of our several Employments with infinitely more Ease and Satisfaction, than we cou'd do if depriv'd of it: Speech and its Organs, were given us, with their Variety, to give a Pleasure in their Symphony, or melodious Harmony; by means

of this it is, that we become capable of expressing our pious and dutiful Regards to our *Maker* either more privately, or in the publick Worship of the Church: without it we cou'd not so manifestly join in her Praises to the Almighty! neither cou'd we so constantly, or at all, declare to others our Thanks to God for our own Health or the Health of ours; our own Deliverance, or the Deliverance of ours; or of any whose imminent Dangers we were Spectators of? Nay, without these Organs how dull and melancholly wou'd Society be to us! The Satisfactions of Society, or even of a single good Companion, wou'd be eclips'd, if not entirely lost.—Now as these are the several Ends for which *Speech* is given us, we shall presently see, that *Cursing* either our selves, or others, is a manifest Abuse of it. All these Purposes are plainly for the Pleasure and Advantage of Mankind; but a wishing Hurt to myself or another, (as all *Cursing* supposes,) is the very reverse. It arises from Principles that are unworthy human Nature, and discover a Mind wicked and devilish.

We were undoubtedly form'd for Happiness, and every other Power and Faculty with which we are invested, as well as that of *Speech*, plainly intimate to us that they are never rightly exercis'd, but when they are employ'd in adding to the *Sum total* of Happiness! All, and every Attempt to rob either our selves or others of a rational Satisfaction

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is wrong; so that wishing the Hurt of any of my fellow Creatures must certainly be wrong. What a vitious Taste must I have contracted, if I can take Pleasure in the Misery or Unhappiness of my fellow Creature! On the contrary, it is very natural for a Man to Rejoice and take Pleasure in anothers Prosperity: This is the true Complexion of every good-natur'd, benevolent Creature, and rises highest in a Resemblance of that *Being* who is good to all! So that Cursing is an evident Contradiction to the Law of our Make. —

Again, if we can believe the Person to be sincere that Curses either us, or himself, we must necessarily have the most contemptible Notion of him, we shall esteem him as an abandon'd, hurtful, Part of the Creation; and watch and guard against him, as we wou'd against a professed Enemy. For can I think any other but that if a Man can sincerely wish my Hurt, he will if he has an Opportunity and Power, as certainly effect it?

But here I perceive a common Objection will arise: It is only said in the height of Passion, he was provok'd to it, and as soon as his Passion is over, he means no Harm.

Admitting this to be the Case, I own that an accidental Madness, or a Madness that is only transient and occasional, may possibly be a less Evil to the Subject of it, than a stated, settled Madness: But I know not whether it be so *safe* to his Acquaintance. A Man is
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not so much upon his Guard, where his *Companion* is only disorder'd now and then, as he is, when he is constantly under the Force of Frenzy. Nay, there is scarce any Man would chuse for his Companion, a *furious Man*, whose Frenzy was incessant: Whereas, many will make choice of one who in the general is benevolent and kind, altho' sometimes he may admit of great Excess. Some indeed have pretended to say, *that the best natur'd Men, are the most Passionate and Fiery*. I own that there may be a Character made up of Passion, which in the general may be Fond and Affectionate, and now and then Angry and Wrathful: and no doubt, where the Passions govern the Man, you'll often find this to be the Case; but then such a Man's *good Nature*, as it is call'd, is far from being a rational, solid Thing, it has no Virtue in it, it arises only from Humour, and Fancy; and the Passion *in both Extremes* is very fleeting, cannot endure long; but nevertheless, the *angry Extreme* may be very fatal! How many of these Sort of *good-natur'd* Creatures, have not only *curs'd* one another, but in their *Paroxysms* of Heat, or Fits of Anger, have destroy'd the *Lives* of their fellow Creatures? A *passionate Man* ought therefore to be so far from being look'd upon as a good-natur'd Man, and his Curses to stand for nothing; that he shou'd be esteem'd as a very dangerous Man!

But

But it may be farther objected that a Man has indeed got an Habit of Cursing, but he means nothing by it: nor does any Body that knows him, think he does; he is truly an honest, kind, inoffensive Man, and therefore there cannot be much harm in his Cursing.

As this is often made use of as a Defence, or Mitigation of the Crime of *Cursing*, I shall give it a more particular Consideration. And it is said in defence of it, that a Man has got a Habit of Cursing, but he truly means nothing by it.

This is a most surprizing Defence! his being accusom'd to Cursing, or getting an Habit is no more an excuse for it, than his being accusom'd to *Thieving*, or getting an Habit of *Stealing* wou'd be an excuse for that! Wou'd an *Highwayman* think you, meet with more Mercy from a *Judge* and *Fury* at the OLD BAILY, if he pleaded, that he had been so accusom'd to rob on the Highway, that he cou'd not leave it! This wou'd be so far from favouring his Cause, that it wou'd more certainly determine his Condemnation!

Thoughtlessness no doubt, may be and often is, the Product of Custom: no occasion for exercising the Attention of the Mind so much whilst we are doing a Thing we have constantly habituated our selves unto. We are capable, for instance, of muttering over a Song, or singing a Tune, to which we have used our selves, whilst the *Thought* is busily engag'd

engag'd about an Affair of a quite different Nature; But then the *Habit* don't make that to be *Indifferent* which is in its own Nature *Criminal*: for, if it cou'd in one Instance, it might in another, and so in all, and then in the Case of the *Highwaymen* there wou'd be no Guilt.

Nor will a Man's meaning nothing by his *Cursing*, be any sufficient Excuse for his Crime; he is yet guilty, and that too in a *Sense* which perhaps he is very unwilling to admit of: for whilst a Man is cursing Himself or his Neighbour, and at the same Time means Nothing, he is *Lying*. He bids God to *Damn a Man*, and yet God is a Witness, that he is only mocking him, he means no such Thing! what Insolence is this! wou'd any Man be guilty of so much Rudeness with his Prince, or Sovereign! —

But perhaps this *silly Fellow* may form such Ideas of God, as *Elijah* did of *Baal*, in the ironical Description he gave of him to his Priests, *viz.* that either he was Talking, or had something he was in pursuit of, or on a Journey, or Asleep, and so not likely to attend to what he said! —

But let me tell every *prophane Curser*, that God is a God of Truth, and has forbid all Kinds of Falshood, much more such solemn and *prophane Lying* as is here supposed; and he has told us, that for every idle Word that Men shall speak they shall be accountable in

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the Day of-Judgment. And that all Lyars, shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death. So that as by our Words we shall be Justified, so, by our Words we shall be Condemned. And can this be the Case, without any Notice taken of our Words! — It is a mistaken Notion which many have got, that Words are but Wind, and of no Signification, when we mean nothing by them! They are evidently *Criminal* in the Sight of God; and all *prophane Cursing* is a solemn, formal, and open denial of Truth, when without a Meaning!

But again, they are not only Criminal in the Sense of the *divine Constitutions*, but they are an Affront and open Contempt of all *civil Ordinances* and *Statutes*. They suppose that both God and Man must mean nothing by those Laws and Sanctions that have Censur'd and Condemn'd them. But is not every Man, in whatever Station or Condition of Life, a Creature of God? and a Member of Society? and can he shake off his Dependence? If not, does not every *Curse* he utters argue the greatest Stupidity and Folly! Let none think his saying *he had no Meaning*, will prove that God, and humane Legislators had none! and if he does escape the Sanctions of the latter, let him consider with himself, and be well assur'd that he can evade the Judgment of the former! If he is not sure

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that he can dispute the Point with his Judge, and come off by telling him that like *Solomon's Fool*, he flung about his Curses, as he did his Fire-brands, without any meaning, *for he was but in Sport!* he may, an hundred to one, pass for a FOOL himself. Before such a one venture to satisfy himself with the Issue of such a *Plea*, let me desire him to take the following Things into his Consideration.

And in the first Place, let him consider that by every *Curse* he pronounces on his fellow Creature, or himself, he is guilty of the *highest Presumption*, in assuming the Seat of God. This is unpardonable Insolence! Nay more, it is supposing himself to have the ALMIGHTY under his own command! God Damn you! — me! — your Blood! — my Blood! — looks as if he imagin'd his *Maker* was become his *Lackey*, or rather his *Tool* or *Executioner!* How came this about, you poor inconsiderable Reptile! how came it about, that Vengeance shou'd belong to you! Or that you knew how to direct Damnation! *Again*, I ask you, are the *Beings* you so freely bestow your Curses upon, any Part of your real Property? did you make them? or do you preserve them in Being? if not, what have you to do, to direct their Fate, and pronounce their Doom! *Besides*, what art thou thy self? dost thou not daily stand in need of the *divine Mercy!* and yet art thou so Vile as to ask Damnation for thy Brother! — Foolish, conceited mortal! what Condition

Condition wou'd yours be, if it shou'd be dealt to you, in proportion as you wish it to another! or how are you prepar'd to receive the *Curse of God* upon your self?

Again, did God ever tell you, that you might be *welcome* to Invoke him for such Purposes when any had Provok'd or Injur'd you? if he has not, is it not an Instance of insupportable Pride and Arrogance! But as he has *forbidden* you, depend upon it, he'll support the Honour of his own Government, notwithstanding this your *Cursing* is an open Challenge upon him to do it! It is no less than to tell him in the Face, that he is not fit to prescribe Laws to you, and that you don't trouble your Head about his Threatenings! you'll continue to Curse and Damn your self and others, and bid him, yea command him to be your *Tool* or *Executioner*, in spite of all he has said to the contrary.

2. A *prophane Curser* cannot be a virtuous religious Man; except Contraries can be united, or Light and Darknes dwell together! A *virtuous Man*, and a *prophane* or *common Curser*, are opposite Characters! for how is it possible that we shou'd with the same Member, *i. e.* our *Tongues*, bless God even the Father of all Men; and with *it also* curse Men who are made in his Image. St. *James* might well call this a *Poison* of the highest Degree! As he so very pertinently describes a *cursing Tongue*, even as full of deadly Poi-

son; inasmuch as this sort of a Tongue is to the rational World, what *Poisons* are to an humane Body; for these operate on the animal Secretions, by their Contrariety, or tendency to destroy the Order of them; and so do the Poisons of a cursing Tongue in the moral World.

The Poison of a cursing Tongue in the moral Creation, appears by its Contrariety to the settled order of Nature among intelligent Beings. The Order of the moral Creation, is, that as the Creatures of God we shou'd endeavour to resemble him, in Benevolence and Love to our fellow Creatures; that we shou'd as we are bound by the *first Laws of Nature*, contribute to the utmost of our Power to remove every Degree of Pain and Misery from others, and impart every Degree of Happiness; and by doing so, we not only answer the Ends we were form'd for, with regard to others, but to our selves also, for the highest Pleasures and Satisfaction result to our own Minds from such Conduct! But a *cursing Tongue* is the very contrary of all this, and implies a Relish for Misery; as it plainly implies and expresses a Wish of the Hurt of our fellow Creatures.— God has bid us, or made it our Duty, to Pray for all Men, to do Good to all Men, to Bless all Men; but this is absolutely inconsistent with a Desire of the Hurt, or a Cursing, or a Damning of any Man; Praying for, and *wishing Hurt to*; Blessing, and

and Cursing; doing Good, and Damning, are direct opposites; so that these essential Parts of Virtue and Religion, *viz.* Praying for, Blessing, and doing Good to all Men, cannot be consistent with a *cursing Tongue*; and therefore the prophane Curser is infected with a deadly Poison, with which *Virtue* and *Religion* will not, nay, they cannot live.—The *Doctrine of the Christian Revelation*, which is a Testimony to Truth, or the most refin'd Reason, has strongly insisted upon a steady Affection and Love to our fellow Creatures, as the only sure Evidence of our being the *Children of God*; if a Man says, he Loves God, and Hates his Brother, *he's a Lyar*, and the Truth is not in him! There is a direct Opposition in a Love of God, and wishing Hurt to any of our fellow Creatures; for God having made Man in his own Image, or Man being the *Workmanship* of God, if we love God, we shall love his Likeness, and cultivate a Desire of the Welfare of our fellow Creatures, as his Workmanship.

The Poison of a *cursing Tongue*, is likelier to spread its Infection in proportion to the Circumstances, Condition, and Interest or Weight of Influence, Men have in Society. And therefore Men of every Degree and Rank, that are truly possess'd of this *venemous Member* will in Proportion become a Curse to Society.

Again,

Again, he that indulges in himself *prophane Cursing*, altho' he means not as he says, yet he forfeits all Credit to whatever he says. His Word is not to be taken, who can *Lye* and *Deceive* in the Form and Guise of the most horrid Impieties! That Man has lost all Sense of the Sacredness of Speech, and might with equal Reason break thro' all the Promises and Engagements he at any time makes. For can I Invoke the solemn and awful Name of God, and fix it to a Lie? can I thus vilely profane it, and might I not with as much ease be *Deceitful*, and *Hypocritical* with my fellow Creature in any thing else? The Man that can satisfy himself, with the accustom'd Vice of *prophane Cursing*, notwithstanding his constant public Invocations of the Deity, *that he wou'd have Mercy upon him! and incline his Heart to keep that Law, viz.* that which forbids his taking God's Name in vain: That Man who can do this without Remorse, wou'd as easily satisfy himself, with *Theft*, *Murder*, and *False-witness*; if human Laws did not inflict a greater Punishment on these, than on the other: for whoever he be that can allow himself in the known and open Violation of one express divine Law, does by that plainly dispute the Authority of the LAW-GIVER; he is not sincerely and in Principle a Subject of any other of his Commands; but professes himself guilty of the whole. —

Besides,

Besides, *prophane Cursing* is a Prophanation and Corruption of Language it self. *Words* are sacred Things, and shou'd always stand to express the Ideas they are the most obvious Signs of; they shou'd neither be equivocal nor false, but properly chosen to convey the Idea of the Speaker. But *prophane Cursing*, is either *prophane Lying*, or rises to the utmost height of Impiety! in both Senses is condemned by the Laws of Language, which has before been prov'd to have the Welfare and Happiness of the Creature, as its great Point in view; and to which *prophane Cursing* stands directly oppos'd.

I cannot forbear yet remarking, the Tendency of this, as well as all other Vices to cloud the *Understandings* of Mankind, and enslave their *Reason*: as is plainly the Case, among such prophane Curfers, who by Custom are led to call upon God to Damn an Horse, an Oar, a Stone, a Post, or a Cart, — any thing that falls in their Way; *God Almighty* must be invok'd to Curse and Damn it, whether capable of any Evil or not: These stupid Creatures, might soon be taught, one wou'd think, to Invoke a Post, or a Cart, or a Stone, or an Horse to interceed for them to *God Almighty*! for a Cart, or a Post, a Stone, or an Oar, cou'd assoon pray to God, as God cou'd damn them, they being incapable Subjects of Damnation!

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“To what I have offer’d some may yet
 “object, that Men of the *best Sense, Educa-*
 “*tion, and Birth*, practice these Licenses of
 “Language, and therefore to say it is a Proof
 “of the want of Judgment is wrong.”

I deny not but that these Excesses in Language do sometimes grow in such Soil that the Objection points at, but then this is so far from receiving a Foil or Lustre from Learning, good natural Parts, or high Birth, that it appears more Vile and Hateful: it clouds those fine Parts, impeaches that good Erudition, and stains that high Blood in a most remarkable Manner! Little occasion have Men of Sense and Learning to embellish their Language with *Oaths* and *Curses*. The *Graces* these throw upon their Conversation are as dark as Hell!

Besides, these must know that *Oaths* and *Curses* won’t alter their Nature because spoken by them, any more than if they fell from the Mouth of a *Drayman*. *Truth* and *Virtue* will give no way at all to Men of Sense and high Blood, or pay any Obedience to Crowns or Scepters! Vice will be Vice still, and Truth will be Truth still, whether a King or a Beggar is concern’d in it.

Hence let none think that *Oaths* or *Curses* are Vices of a less hurtful Nature, because sometimes heard from a Nobleman, a Scholar, or a Wit? no, it is only a Proof that *Vice* has its *Captives* among the Great and Learned,

ed, as well as among the Mean and Illiterate. *Nobility, Learning, and large Capacities* make *Virtue* shine the more conspicuously! they give a kind of Elevation to it, and by reason of their advanced Situation, it appears more extensively.

And so in proportion *Vice* when exalted, has the opportunity of a wider spread of its Infection. But the advanced Circumstances it is in, are far from expelling any Degree of its poisonous Nature. A *prophane Oath* or *Curse*, is as great an Evil in the Mouth of a KING, as in the Mouth of a COBLER; nor can *all* his Authority and Power, be of the least Use in screening him from a final Account. Now as this is so manifest a Truth, it will serve as a *Rule* to condemn such who imagine that because Men of superior Stations practice this, or the other *Vice*, therefore it is commendable or graceful, and will become them the better! This is plainly a very false Conclusion.—There is not any thing worthy our Imitation in Men of exalted Stations, but their Virtues ——— Besides no wise Man, wou'd look upon *Oaths* and *Curses* from the Mouth of a *Nobleman*, or a *Scholar*, but as Blemishes to his Reputation, and real Deformities in his Conduct! They must give a *Disgust*, and produce *Contempt* even from a *poor Man*, who is afraid of thus offending his Maker; for so says *Solomon*, better is a poor Man that

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walks in his Uprightness, than he that is perverse in his Ways, though he be Rich.

But I proceed to consider a little the Unreasonableness, and Wickedness of *prophane Swearing*.

And as by an *Oath* is understood an open appeal to God, as to a Being that knows our inmost Thoughts and Designs; and as a Witness of the Truth of those Things we affirm or deny, and as believing him to be the God of Truth and Holiness, professing our selves ready to submit to his Censure and Displeasure, for all, and every of our Variations, and Departures from *Truth*: As this I say, is the common allowed Definition of an Oath, we shall soon discern the Prophaneness of common Swearing.

An *Oath* is plainly the most solemn Act of Religion, a reasonable Creature can perform: and as such, is very unfit to mingle in common Conversation. Wou'd you not account that Man an *over formal* pharisaical Creature, that spoke over some Collect or short Prayer, between every Sentence of his Conversation with you? wou'd you think it proper he shou'd have a *Minister* attend him into all Company, and give him the *Eucharist*, 20, 30, 40, or 100 Times a-day, in order to support the Credit of his Conversation? This you wou'd abhor and detest the Thought of, — which of you wou'd chuse his Company? Or rather who wou'd not shun and despise him?

him? And yet this is much the same Case with the *common Swearer*, for he prophanes the *most* sacred and solemn Act of Religion, every time he throws out his Oaths! Now what is it that a Man can esteem Sacred, when he has render'd an *Oath* as prophane, or common, as the Dirt he treads upon? No other Act of Devotion to the *Deity* can be interpreted as an Act of sincere Homage! He has made his Appeals to GOD so familiar, that the Distance is lost, which was necessary to preserve in him a due Reverence and Fear. There is an *old Proverb* will ever hold good in this Case, viz. *Too much Familiarity breeds Contempt!* It has a natural and strong Tendency this way, and therefore every *prophane Swearer*, must be incapable of worshipping God, with a Devotion suitable to the Majesty he approaches.

Again, *prophane* or *common Swearing*, weakens that Security which *civil Society* in many Cases require. Men are sometimes call'd to Swear by the *civil Magistrate*, and then an *Oath* is in *Courts of Judicature* for Confirmation either of what is affirm'd concerning our selves, or others; either as a Security of our Allegiance to the supreme Magistrate, and Fidelity to the Community; or in Evidence for the King, for, or against the Subject. And there is no other Way agreed upon by many Governments to put an end to Debates and Strifes.

But how is this preserv'd Sacred for the necessary Uses of Society by a *common Swearer*? he is no less than an Enemy to his Country; he weakens its Securities, breaks down its Fences, and throws open Property! His King, and his fellow Subjects, shou'd look upon him as a professed Enemy! nor shou'd they suffer him unmolestedly to go on to stab the whole Constitution.

Will that Man preserve the Regard due to an *Oath*, that cannot speak a Sentence without one? he frequently applies his *Oaths* both to Truth and Falshood, as it happens; nor concerns his Head any more about them!

It is true, where the Sense of Guilt is not quite lost, you'll sometimes hear a *common Swearer*, use this *Salvo*, I have swore an Oath, *God forgive me!* — But it rarely happens that he means any more by his *Prayer*, than he does by his *Oath*! for attend him but a little, and you'll find him returning to his *Oaths*, as a Dog to his Vomit, or a Sow that is wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire.

Again, *Perjury* is the almost necessary Concomitant or Attendant of *common Swearing*. Men that give themselves to it, either being passionate, hasty Spirits; or stupid, unthinking Wretches. They neither of them Reason coolly about what they so solemnly affirm; and very often make such Appeals to real, yea to known Falshoods. What Security can the *Publick* have whilst this Vice is so
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common and prevalent among us? — I have very lately walk'd the Streets with a *Gentleman* that came out of a part of this Kingdom, where formerly I have been myself, and was surpriz'd at the frequency of Oaths and Curses there, and yet he was *shock'd* at the current Language of the Streets, not only from Car-men, Coach-men, and Porters, &c. But from Persons that appear'd much better! — Unhappy *London*! with all thy Glory thou art infected with this sickning mortal Distemper; this abounding Iniquity! —

I expect some will say, and think, I find myself not concern'd in this Charge; for tho' I Swear frequently, yet I don't often Swear by my *Maker*, I Swear by *Jove*! by *Heaven*! *Zoonds* or *Blood*! by the *Mafs*! or *Faith*!

To which I answer, that if the Objector professes himself a Christian, (and many of our common Swearers wou'd be highly affronted, if you was to call their Christianity in question; or their being *baptized Members* of our Church, and consequently *good Churchmen*!) If these, I say, such as these, wou'd not in reality renounce all their Pretensions to Christianity! they must renounce all kinds of Swearing and Cursing. — Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, commands his Followers *not to Swear at all*; *neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne, nor by the Earth for it is his Footstool*, — nor by any thing that is a Creature of God, — a bare *Affirming* or *Denying* was
to

to be the constant Law of Language to them in their common Conversation,—and *whatsoever*, says he, *is more than Yes, or No, cometh of Evil!* Mat. v. 34, 38. And it is worthy Observation, that St. *James* is very emphatical upon this Rule of our Saviour's, Jam. v. 12. But *above all things* my Brethren *Swear not*; neither by Heaven, nor by Earth, nor by *any other Oath*, but let your Yes be Yes, and your No be No, lest ye fall into Condemnation! so that *common Swearing* not only proceeds from some *evil Cause*, according to our Saviour's Account of it, but *all Kinds of it*, according to St. *James*, bespeak some false Design, and are wicked, and Condemnable.—It is no Defence of an *Oath* to say it is made by a Creature, it is rather a Proof of the Stupidity and Idolatry of it! for instance, to Swear by St. *George*, or St. *Patrick*, &c. is to suppose St. *George* and St. *Patrick* a sort of omnipresent Beings, because an *Englishman* or an *Irishman* wou'd use the same Oath, as well in one Part of the Globe, as another: and an Appeal to them is to suppose them capable of searching the Heart and knowing the Thoughts! it is a kind of deifying the Thing or Being we Swear by, and amounts to a Species of Idolatry. —

Now shou'd a Pagan be admitted to an Audience of our modern *Christian Swearers*, (as I venture for once to call them,) and shou'd he understand that their common Conversation,

tion, was in direct Contempt and Contradiction of this express Command of Christ and his Apostle; what wou'd he think of Christianity or of the Professors of it? He might no doubt see a Beauty and Fitness in the Doctrine and Rule, but he wou'd imagine himself to have full as good a Claim to the Name of a Christian, as these Despisers of its Precepts! he must think that their calling themselves *Christians*, was only a mere Grimace, or a real Banter put upon the Authority of Christ! and must be persuaded that these Men thought themselves no more oblig'd by his Authority, than if he had been *only the Son of a poor Carpenter!* —

Thus it appears with great Clearness that till *common Swearers* correct this Vice and become wholly reclam'd from it, they are so far from having any Right to the Name of Christians; that they Act in open Contempt of one of the plainest and most express Laws of Christ! — Ye are my Disciples indeed says Jesus, if ye do whatsoever I Command you: but if Men do the direct Contrary to what he Commands; can they be his Disciples? I'll leave any of these prophane Persons; to draw the Conclusion, or make the Answer. I shall only add a few Remarks,

And the first is this, that all *common Swearing* and *Cursing* is a Reproach to a Christian Nation. It is so, as it is an open Contempt of the established and professed Religion of the

the Country. It is a Reproach, as it is an Act of Disobedience and Rebellion to the *Author* of that Religion who is publickly Ador'd and Worship'd, and who has commanded all the Professors of his Religion, to *Bless them* from whom they receive no better than Curses; to Pray for all Men, to do Good to all; and *not to Swear at all*; but to preserve their Conversations wholly free from any kind of Oaths, or Curses.

Secondly, common Swearing and Cursing must proceed from evil Causes, and cannot but have evil Tendencies; and therefore ought to be Discountenanc'd by every Man that is either a good Subject, a good Man, or a real Christian! this wou'd be done, if they were treated as such kind of Vices they really are, *i. e.* as discovering a false, treacherous, and deceitful Mind.

More particularly, *Swearing* is a plain Intimation from the Swearer, that his Word is not to be taken without an Oath, and why it shou'd be taken with one I know not. If every Man according to his Capacity and Station wou'd pay no Regard, or give no Credit to the *common Swearer*, he wou'd probably soon discern, that his Wickedness was discovered, and wou'd repent, and endeavour after a Cultivation of a greater Love for Truth. —

There are a many within my own Knowledge that dislike publick or common Swearing and Cursing, and wou'd be glad of a more
signal

signal Reformation, but the Difficulties they apprehend in putting those Laws in Execution, which punish these Vices, or of giving Re-proof, discourage their engaging in the Attempt to stem the Tide. Besides, the Spread of the Infection is so general, that a Man free from these Vices rarely finds a *Second* to back his Attempt in an *open Reproof*. I shou'd therefore think that Men of this Character might easily unite, in a professed Contempt and Neglect of what such a prophane Man said, who by his Cursing or Swearing, had forfeited all Claim to any Regard. The breach of good Manners he wou'd find himself the Aggressor in, and that the Treatment he receiv'd was so far from being an Indecency, that it was the just Reward of his Conduct.

But instead of this, the *prophane Creature* meets with no Rebuke from that Quarter where he might most reasonably expect it; nay, instead of a Rebuke, he sometimes meets Men who altho' they won't *Swear* or *Curse* themselves, yet they'll *Laugh* at him that does; as if his *out-of-the-way* Oaths and Curses, were a fit occasion of Chearfulness; which makes the *Fool* think his Company the more entertaining! But this shou'd never be the Case with such who have any Sense of Virtue or Humanity! It wou'd argue a cruel Disposition to laugh at a Man stabbing himself, or breaking his own Limbs to Pieces! And the

E Case

Case before us is not less Cruel or Preposterous!

I wou'd again Remark, how much mistaken those unhappy Wretches are, who imagine that there is a *Beauty* and *Gracefulness* in Cursing and Swearing! Beauty and Gracefulness result from Order and Proportion, they are the Produce of pure Nature, or tally with it:—but *Curses* and *Oaths* are a Perversion of Order and Decency, they are a vile Corruption of Language, and have VICE and FOLLY as their true Essence, Original, and Tendency! Let the Conversation of one of these prophane Creatures be examined, and then see how his *Curses* and *Oaths* stand in every Sentence! nothing at all to the purpose, but only to render the Sense and Meaning more confus'd and disorderly! such Breaks and Corruptions of Language, wou'd deserve the *Rod* or the *Ferula* from a *Schoolmaster* to one of his most illiterate School-boys, tho' they were not made by Oaths or Curses. — They often seem indeed to be made use of as a kind of Flourish to fill up a *Vacancy of Sense*, and plead strongly the blundering Stupidity of their Author! but methinks there's not much Beauty or Gracefulness in this! —

I add once more, as an humble Proposal to the Consideration of the LEGISLATURE of *Great-Britain*, whether it wou'd not be reasonable to make some *disqualifying Laws* that might punish prophane Cursers and Swearers.

They

They seem to me as not fit to be admitted as *Evidences* in *Courts of Judicature*, or to have any Power invested in them over the Lives or Properties of the People! To Disqualify such Persons wou'd appear full as Reasonable, as the retaining disqualifying Laws on any who *revere* the solemnity of an Oath! —

“ It may be objected, that in a Court of Judicature Men are apprehensive that their Words will be strictly examined, and that thro’ fear of open and public Censure they will guard against *false Swearing*; and hence Men may have room to expect some Security from the legal *Oaths* of a common or *prophane Swearer*. ”

This indeed may in some Instances take place, but there are infinitely more Cases where it will not; a *common Swearer* that makes no Conscience of an Oath, will be ready even before a *Court of Judicature* to take the same *License* where *Interest* or *Inclination* wou'd lead him to Prevaricate, if at the same time he knew that he cou'd do it with Impunity. Whence is it that we have so many known *Perjuries*? Can it arise from a more probable *Source*, than that of *prophane* or *common Swearing*? — It is true, there may be something in the *careless* and *indifferent Manner* in which it is usually administered; it is often jabber'd over as a *Gypsie* says her *Gibberish*; and has so loose an Aspect, that

one would sometimes think it was nothing at all but a mere Formality; and only contrived to procure the Petty-Officer a *Shilling*!—I have sometimes observed such a prodigality with *Oaths* in our public Courts, that Men have been sworn as Witnesses without any Concern whether they should be wanted as such, or not; nor has one Question been asked them, altho they have made the solemn Affirmation. — I mention these Things only to obviate the *Objection* about the Sacredness of Oaths in open Courts; and am persuaded that any careful *Observer* will think with me, that the *loose Air* with which *Oaths* are administered, and taken, discover very little Reason or Foundation, on which we can form an Opinion, that they are esteemed, according to their Nature, so very sacred and binding!

From these Considerations, what *Security* can be expected either to the *King* or *Country*, or *private Property*, from an Oath taken in open Court, by a *prophane Swearer*? — Among the Jews, and in more antient Times, *Oaths* were esteemed very sacred Things, and the manner of their taking them very solemn. Gen. xiv. 22. *Abram* swears to the King of *Sodom*, by lifting up his hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of Heaven and Earth. And in *Solomon's* time the *Oath* was to come before the *Altar* in the Temple. 1 Kings, viii. 31, 32. If any
Man

Man trespass against his Neighbour, and he require an Oath of him, and the Oath come before thine Altar in this House, says *Solomon*, then hear thou in Heaven, and do, and judge thy Servants, condemning the Wicked, to bring his way upon his Head, and justifying the Righteous, to give him according to his Righteousness.

We are told, that this was the practice also of other Nations, *viz.* for the Depo-
nent to stand before the Altar; as did the *Athenians, Carthaginians, and Romans.*—

The *Jews* it must be owned, did in time become very corrupt and degenerate in their Oaths, they swore by *Creatures*; and by the *Altar*; and at last, they became so stupid as to esteem their CORBAN their most solemn Oath, i. e. an Oath made by the *Gift on the Altar*, as more obligatory than the eternal Laws of Truth and Virtue, Matth. xxiii. 18. All which prove that the Solemnity and Sacredness of an Oath was preserved among the *Jews*: altho they had idolatrously altered the *Object* of their Appeal.

To this purpose, it is worthy Observation that in *Joshua's* time, an *Oath* was imposed under this most solemn Form, *Give glory to God*, Jos. vii. 19. From what I have mentioned here, I would observe that the *Security* and *Usefulness* that could arise from *Oaths* to Society, has been only preserved by the
Sacredness

Sacredness and Solemnity of them. This appears undeniably plain from the *Jews*, who had learnt to throw off the Sacredness of all other Oaths, but their *Corban*; or *principal Oath*. If they swore by the *Temple* it was nothing, or by the *Altar* it was nothing. — They had destroyed the Solemnity of the Thing, by the frequent Use of it; and if so, what must we think of every common prophane Swearer? can he think an Oath or Swearing by *God*, is *any Thing* just at such or such a set Time, and in such a particular Place, and not think it *any Thing* at all other Times, and in all other Places? it is very improbable that he should.

I would conclude with some farther Remarks, as proper Deductions from the Nature, Design, and Usage of *Oaths*.

And in the *first Place*, it is evident that *Oaths* have been in use in the best regulated Societies in the World: And with great propriety they have been administer'd; forasmuch as *Civil Justice* has been secured and supported by them in many important Instances; they have effected the Benefit of Society, by their most strongly engaging *Conscience*, in matters of Difficulty, Temptation, Debate.

But then Secondly, they become incapable of answering this End, when the *Solemnity* and *Sacredness* of them is weakned and lost,

as it is by a common or prophane use of them.

Tbirdly, it appears pretty evident, what our Saviour meant by that Prohibition, *swear not at all*, viz. that they should not *prophane an Oath* or make it common, he meant not to deny the *Magistrate* or *civil Society*, that proper Security which an *Oath* would afford, when preserved truly Sacred.

Fourthly, Those *Gentlemen* seem to mistake who refuse to take an *Oath*, when required by the *Magistrate*, purely on account of that Prohibition of our Saviour's. And the Concessions they make, to what they call a *solemn Affirmation*, seems to be nothing but a *Scrupulosity* about the Form of an Oath; "I do *solemnly*, *sincerely*, and *truly* declare" and *affirm, that the Evidence I shall give in this Cause shall be the truth, &c.*" is as much an Oath as any other Form can be; as either lifting up the Hand to Heaven; or putting an Hand under his Thigh to whom we swear; or standing before the Altar; or joining Hands over the Altar; or declaring upon our Oath; — declaring and affirming, *truly, sincerely, and solemnly* is exciting the *Conscience* to an impartial Attention, to all the intents and purposes of an Oath, and may with as great Propriety be called an Oath, as that of St. Paul's, *I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not* —

Lastly,

Lastly, common Swearing and Cursing, is an affront to the Deity; an injury to Society; an impeachment of the Fidelity, and Integrity of the prophane Person; a shrewd Sign of his want of good Sense; and I'll add, is frequently the effect of *Cowardice!* Nothing is more common than for a *Coward* to bully and hector with *Oaths* and *Curses!* The *Man* thinks that this discovers a greatness of Spirit, and if he can but terrify his *Adversary* with his hellish Language, he gains his Point! —

Since then there is not any one thing can be said in defence of this stupid, senseless, unprofitable Vice, let the Views in which I have put it, have their due Weight; as I doubt not but they will with *all such* as have any regard left to God, Themselves, or their Country —



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